

Danton and other Verse



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DANTON AND OTHER VERSE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Fcap. 8vo, 5s.

BALLADS
AND OTHER VERSE

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
LONDON, NEW YORK, AND BOMBAY

DANTON
AND
OTHER VERSE
BY
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LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

LONDON, NEW YORK, AND BOMBAY

1896

Edinburgh : T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to Her Majesty

PR
4099
B3793a

PREFACE

THE following sketches of episodes in the French Revolution, which for convenience are labelled 'Danton,' have no pretensions to be a drama, such as the name might seem to advance, nor to historical precision. Words, *e.g.*, are put into the speakers' mouths on other occasions than those on which they were actually used, and all the incidents are not vouched for, though all, or most, are based on actual or reputed facts. It will be observed that the events belong chiefly to the last six months of Danton's life, when he had retired from office; when the Terror reigned; but long after the September massacres. The portrait given is not, I think, in its main outlines unfaithful. But it would be, if even earlier in his life he had, as was so long believed, devised and organised those hideous massacres. Pro-

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bably no student of French history believes that now. But did he try to stop them? Did he disapprove of them? The more the subject is investigated, the more certain it seems that he did; that he was quite powerless to repress them by force, offhand; that if he had gone, as a man of martyr-spirit like General Gordon might have gone, with a walking-stick in his hand to the prisons, he would probably have lost his life there as he eventually did in the cause of mercy, instead of living to devise measures, without which far more horrible massacres must have ensued. He himself spoke of the 'bloody days mourned by all good citizens,' 'the terrible events no human power was in condition to control,' much as Roland did when he said 'the Executive was unable either to foresee or prevent them.' Had Roland's party been less jealous of him they would never have occurred. Those who are incredulous, remembering the stories out of which the contrary

belief has been evolved, should take care that they also know how charges apparently most circumstantial, and if true most damnatory, have by patient investigation been proved one by one to be wholly false.

When his enemies called him a Cromwell, Danton (for as yet Mr. Carlyle was not) repudiated the name! But with much external dissimilarity he was in some essentials a French Cromwell. A regicide, like him, and for the same reasons; like him, a lover of law but only equal law, and of stern but only regular justice; like him he was long execrated as a monster. Mr. Carlyle, with wonderful insight, though without facts since revealed by investigation, stripped off something of the ogre and disclosed something of the man. But no history of him has as yet, I believe, been written in England, and therefore, he probably still remains to most Englishmen a somewhat shadowy figure. In a life of him on which I am now

engaged, though nothing alleged against him will be suppressed or evaded, hard facts will, I think, show that, among so many crotchets-mongers, factionists, and fanatics, he was conspicuous for sagacity and the faculty of adapting means to ends ; that, despite a certain ostentation in speech (too frank to excite more than a smile even in a foreigner), he was not an egotist, but devoted to the Republic ; and, above all things, a man of action,—the one statesman of the French Revolution worthy of the name.

PART I

DANTON¹

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*'So passes, like a gigantic mass of valour, ostentation, fury,
affection, and wild revolutionary force and manhood, this
Danton to his unknown home.'*

CARLYLE.

THE 'PLACE DE LA RÉVOLUTION'

The 'Tricoteuses' ² sitting round the Guillotine, sing.

SISTERS, hail ! again we meet
 Watchful, at our wonted seat
 Round our mistress, round our Queen,
 Round our Lady Guillotine.

Sit ye round, and as ye sit
 Briskly with your needles knit,
 Briskly knit, and knitting sing
 Doom and death to Court and King.

Planed and polished here 's a bed
 Meet for any lordling's head,
 That 's the pillow——sound and deep
 On it every sleeper's sleep.

Sisters, hark ! with roll of drum,
Tr-r-rum, the tumbrils come,
Drear and dismal sound is that
To your sleek aristocrat.

Fast they come and fast they go,
Fast the throng reels to and fro
Every time the knife has shone ;
We alone sit knitting on.

Fast they come and fast they go,
Knit we for each life a row,
Clash of knife and needle's click
Echoing our arithmetic.

Tall and comely, who is he ?
Welcome, Monsieur le Marquis !
Pity such blue blood should spirt
O'er the snow of such a shirt !

Next My Lady,—what a neck
For your diamonds to deck !
Thinks the headsman, as you strip,
'Scarce it needs a scissors-snip.'

Mademoiselle,—with tears and cries !
Shame upon you, cockatrice ;
Could you live with mate to match
What a craven brood you 'd hatch !

Sister silenced, lo ! the heir,—
Curl-pate, how his blue eyes stare !
So :—and now for cartage cram
All the wolf-pack, cub and dam.

Fast they come and fast they go,
Let your knitting not be slow ;
Rest not ; does your Lady rest ?
Well may she be weariest.

Priests ! and one slips loose and picks
From his breast a crucifix ;
Prithee, Sanson, spoil their sport,
Cut the rogues' *Oremus*³ short.

Croesus !—ay, and he would give
Gold by millions, just to live :
Gold as dust there, flung to sup
All his life-blood's puddle up.

Here's a prater,—thinks forsooth
Death's lie will outlive the truth,
Takes our platform for his tub,
Drown him, drums, with rubadub.

Fast they come and fast they go,
Fast the streaks of crimson flow ;
Some have struggled, none have been
Spared by Lady Guillotine.

Ever up and up they troop,
Ever down the proud heads stoop,
Ever quivering sways the cord,
Ever falls our Lady's sword.

Threescore rows, and threescore lives,
Famously our knitting thrives,
Willing workers we have been,
We and Lady Guillotine.

Stay we now : the last head drops,
No more stains the sawdust sops,
One by one, our knitting done,
Part we till to-morrow's sun.

FIRST PARISIAN. The old man faced death bravely,
never flinched
Nor trembled, and what colour of the face
The Luxembourg⁴ had left him, faded not
Until the axe fell.

SECOND PARISIAN. Prithee, friend, speak low :
The streets have ears and every house an eye ;
Pity another and thou art thyself
Suspect of being suspect—a mortal crime :
He was a traitor.

FIRST PARISIAN. Staunch to stand for France
In France's need, if that were traitorous.
He was no vulgar-souled aristocrat
Rotten beneath bright varnish, heeding not
Though men starved in the streets and in the
streets
To 'scape starvation women sold themselves,
So he and all his sty and stable kind
Were littered soft and mangered sumptuously.
I knew him, and I never knew a man
Better or braver, moving unbesmirched
'Mid all the vermin of the Capital,
De Rohans, Cagliostros, courtesans,
Court plots and counter plots, and purulent

Iniquities of diamond necklaces,⁵
A second Bayard ; loyal to his King
Until we slew him, loyal to the State
Thereafter, when the Stranger menaced
France ;
Not wasteful of his patrimony, true
To olden modes and ancient-rooted faith,
And self-constrained to natural nobleness
By pride of immemorial ancestry.
Were he a traitor, and the charges true
Wherewith they trapped him, then Iscariot
Were purer than the Christ.

SECOND PARISIEN. Well, peace be with him,
One in a thousand he, but such an one
As by his very goodness shields the bad,
Turning aside Heaven's lightning—think of
those,
The others of that thousand—peers of his—
Who crushed men with perpetual tax and
toil,
Tormented them with thong and sword and
fire,
And called the foreigner against our France—
Then ask my heart for pity, what of heart
I once had long ago was turned to stone.

FIRST PARISIAN. My heart was once as pitiless as
thine;

The Bourbon, Orléans, Hanover, like dogs
Each snarling at the other, were one mind
In one thing, to destroy, ere she were strong,
Our young Republic: fires of treason spread
From south to north, and strangers trod our
soil,

Each man did what was right in his own eyes,
And chaos reigned in Camp and Capital ;
When suddenly a great voice rang through
France

Reverberant, and every heart in France
That loved her leaped up at the sound of it,
But terror fell on traitors : 'twas the voice
Of Danton ; armies sprang up at his word ;
The countryman forsook his pruning-hook,
The citizen his counter—patriots first,
Then soldiers—and their Generals durst not
fail ;

The rich defrayed war's cost, disgorging hoards
Of ill-got gold ; the silent rule of few
Emerged from welter of conflicting tongues,
And he who overthrew the monarchy
Nursed the republic in those mighty arms
Until she stood forth strong and terrible,

And cowed were foes without and foes within:
If now were need to strike would Danton
spare ?

SECOND PARISIAN. Danton ! all France loves
Danton, but in France
Aristocrats have no foe deadlier.
That voice was like the toscin it acclaimed,
Sounding the charge against the enemy,⁶
'The leagued kings threaten us, and at their
feet
We fling as battle-gage this head, a King's.'

FIRST PARISIAN. Swords shine in war and
Danton's words were swords,
Sheathed now, when after battle should be
peace.
He who when treason blew with every wind
Said every traitor must be made to 'fear,'
Would now make cruel Billaud⁷ stay his hand.
He sits in the Convention and confronts
Accusingly the Twelve Omnipotents⁸
With sombre words of warning such as these,
'The Revolution needs revenge no more,
When justice reigns 'tis time revenge should
cease.'

'Better be guillotined than guillotine.'

Last August, as he wandered by the Seine—

Desmoulins with him—over the great flood

The ensanguined sun was setting, 'See,' quoth

he,

'The very water now is turned to blood ;

Too red, too deep the tide' ;

Then to Camille,

'Go, take thy pen and plead for clemency,

And I will back thee.'

At another time,

'Now Danton is asleep, but he shall wake.'

No more he sleeps, and he who saved Duport,⁹

Nor ever gave a private foe to death,

Has sworn that he will stay the guillotine.

SECOND PARISIAN. If Danton is for mercy, so
am I. [*Exeunt.*

THE 'DAMES DE LA HALLE' ¹⁰

*Some fishwomen enter on one side of a street near
the market, and a lady on the other.*

URSULE. What rover have we here abroad so
late,

Befringed, befeathered, and befurbelowed,
Who trespasses within our market bounds?
A friend of Madam Veto,¹¹ I'll be sworn,
And busy with some treason: could I flay
That painted flesh from off thee, bone for bone
I were thy better, yet on back and head
Thou flauntest a year's wage of such as I.
Oh, how, my beauty, these ten fingers itch
To spoil thy pink-and-white; but here come
friends

Who first shall see thee in thy finery
Before they strip thee of it:

See, Antoine,

Jean, Jacques, Philippe, here's proper sport
for you. [*Moves off.*]

LADY. Are you a woman?

[Trying to detain her.]

ANTOINE. Here's a man instead,
No bad exchange, my you-ing¹² cooing dove.
What, pout, and peck me! nay, then——

LADY. Help, help, help!
For pity's sake——

DANTON *[hastening.]* Hands off!

ANTOINE. Who says, 'Hands off'?

DANTON. I. Off into the kennel!
Citizeness,
For such as thou the streets are dangerous.
Name thy abode, and I will guard thee there.

ANTOINE. A thousand curses on him, who is he,
Shouldering us as though the street were his?
Pestilent meddler! at him, all of you;
My foot is crushed to pulp.

JEAN. And my arm wrenched
Well-nigh out of its socket.

JACQUES. Silence, man,
'Tis Danton.

ANTOINE. Danton !

JACQUES. Ay.

ANTOINE. The worse for him,
My lady's gentleman ! Father Duchesne ¹³
Shall say his say to this. Danton, forsooth !

LADY. I cannot thank you, Sir, sufficiently ;
Heaven sent you to my aid ; a score or so
Of hearts and hands like yours, and Paris,
saved,
Would crouch no more, abject and cowardly,
To hags and ruffians, followers of the fiend
Who harks and hounds them on to murder us,
Danton. My God ! I would I had the soul
Of Charlotte ¹⁴, slayer of his fellow-fiend,
I, too, would of a monster rid the world.

DANTON. Marat was—was himself, and yet Marat
Had one thing that the good young Ruler
lacked,
—He gave the poor his all,—and charity
Covers, 'tis said, a multitude of sins.

LADY. Would you defend him, Sir! Thank God,
he's dead.

But Danton lives, and at Méot's Café,¹⁵
In swinish surfeits grossly lavishes
The price of the crown diamonds which he
stole,
Ay, twice stole, from his King and starving
France.

DANTON. If that be true I would his bones may
rot

In his live body: but see, Citizeness,
Here, if I err not, is the house. Adieu.

My name? Georges Jacques——

But more I dare not tell,
Lest I should lose what I have earned to-night,
To-morrow, should it please thee, scrutinise
The roll of the Convention, till thou see'st
A name to those names linked; the tale will
run

The better so, and thou, in telling it,
Wilt, may be, call to mind this jingling saw,
'Measure thy words: blame not, as daubers
paint:

Nor wrong a sinner though thyself a saint.'

[*Exit.*

*As DANTON returns the fishwomen come from
a side street and surround him.*

URSULE. There, there he is who stole our
popinjay
And lamed Antoine.

Thou friend of traitresses
That halest off the men who win us food
To pine away and die in Belgium,
While we must starve at home, see these thin
arms,
These hungry faces lean for lack of bread;
The curse of wives and mothers cling to thee!

LOUISE. He is not thin, the greedy cormorant!

DANTON. Hear me. I am no friend of traitresses,
Death to them all! but, now the law is strong,
'Tis ye that break it that are traitresses,
And that for which ye blame me is my boast.
Oh shame on you, false Frenchwomen, who
grudge

Your sons to France, the mother of us all.

[They cry out angrily and threaten him.]

Nay, ye shall hear me though I deafen you.
Not market-women, mad-women are ye.

LOUISE. (I like a man of lungs, his big voice
booms

Like an alarm bell ; we, perforce, must hear.)

DANTON. I, who have laboured for you night and
day,

Who, when men prated of Three Orders, vowed
I knew but one—The People ; I, who braved
The Châtelet,¹⁶ to shield the people's friend ;
Who cheered the people in the Champ de Mars ;
Who in the people's service left my home,
My babe, my angel wife, whom never more
I saw save in her graveclothes ; I, who scarce
Escaped the daggers of the people's foe,
A hunted outlaw ; I, who scorned to leave
The people, leaderless, to Brunswick's rage
When Roland counselled flight, and would not
budge,

Come life or death, from Paris ; I, who first
Denounced the crown as forfeit at Varennes ;
Who, that great tenth of August, led Marseilles¹⁷
Against the Tuileries, and, afterward,
Led France against the bandit foreigner ;
Who forged you pikes from rusty iron-stuff
And turned your tolling bells to roaring guns,
Who bred for you the soldier-citizens

That bled for you at Valmy and Jemappes ;
A traitor am I ? O unhappy France
Betrayed by thine own daughters, crueller
Than Lear's of Britain were !

URSULE. No, Danton, no,
Forgive us, we are true to France and thee.

ALL. Long live our Danton, to befriend the
weak !

DANTON. Adieu, friends, heed not me ; be true
to France. / [*Exit.*

URSULE. I am as sad as at a funeral,
To 'liven us strike up our market-tune.

SONG

Buy, buy, buy,
Buy a little dish
Of prime fine fish,
Life in them yet,
Shining and wet
From river and sea,
Cool from the pool,

Bright from the brook,
Clean from the hook,
New from the net,
Fresh from the quay,
 Buy, buy,
Buy a little dish
Of prime fine fish.

Buy, buy, buy,
Buy a little dish
Of prime fine fish,
Single them out
Sweet for a meal,
Mackerel, eel,
Turbot or trout,
Lobster or crab,
Dory or dab,
Half or a whole
Salmon or sole,
 Buy, buy,
Buy a little dish
Of prime fine fish.

[*Exeunt.*

ARCIS SUR AUBE

Evening

FIRST TOWNSMAN. The neighbours say that
Danton is come home.

SECOND TOWNSMAN. My sister saw him leave the
diligence,
And, look, 'tis here it stopped before the house.

FIRST TOWNSMAN. I would not grudge a crown
for sight of him;
And, thanks to kind Dame Fortune, there's a
chink
Through which the light gleams.

SECOND TOWNSMAN. Nay, how dar'st thou pry?
Were he to find thee he would twist thy head
With those huge hands of his, that thou would'st
look
Backwards instead of forwards: he's become

Half beast, they say, and half aristocrat,
Gross liver, glutton, gorged with thefts from
France ;

'Tis said he stole the money set apart
To feed our army, wasting it upon
Fine clothes, rich dishes, and the costliest wines,
The which at times with devilish tiger-thirst
He'll mix with blood.

Well, whisper what thou see'st.

FIRST TOWNSMAN. He lies, the giant, outstretched
by the fire

To catch its new-lit warmth, and Margaret—
Thou knowest the old nurse—her wrinkled face
Lit by the flickering firelight, watches him,
Gazing as though she could not gaze her fill,
And by his side his mother sits and strokes
His hair and pats his cheek and lays her own
Upon it, and their lips meet in a kiss,
Why, man, I never saw a gentler look
On human face, it's all ashine with love
Of homecoming and happy-heartedness,
That man drink blood ! so let the whole pack
swear,

But, though they sware the lie by all the saints,
I'd not believe it ; other than of old

He is, but gentler, tenderer ; his eyes,
That once you hardly saw, are open now
And sadder, and his scarred and rugged face
Is thinner and were gaunt to haggardness
But for that smile upon it.

Come away ;

Arcis has bred no monster, 'tis the same
Brave Danton of our boyhood, bold of speech
And bold in act, but always lovable.

SECOND TOWNSMAN. Bold ! overbold he was and
to his cost.

Hast thou forgotten how he fought the bull,
Himself stiff-necked and strong and wild as one,
Half out of rancour that a bull had tossed
And torn him when a child, half out of youth's
Foolhardiness, and how he chased the bull
Bellowing terror from his father's field ?
That flattened, battered face of his still shows
The tokens of the combat—ugliness
By after fever so made uglier
That women, did they ever hate brave men,
Had loathed him as they love and worship him.

FIRST TOWNSMAN. Not I, in faith, nor how at
tree-felling

Marc's axe slipped, and the great gash in his
thigh

Was spouting blood, and thou and I ran off
Wildly, for aid, and when we came again
There Danton stood, his brawny shoulders bare,
His shirt torn off and riven into shreds
To bandage the wide wound, and Marc was
saved.

Danton was always kindly, ev'n as now,
A good son to his mother, ev'n as now,
An honest Frenchman and good patriot
He is, I swear it by the Virgin, now.
I would I had not spied on him, and yet
I long to tell the neighbours.

Come away,
Danton is still our Danton, praised be God.

[*Exeunt.*

DANTON. Mother, the evening chill has left my
bones,

Come out into the garden for a while,
The moon is up, and all the still bright stars
Are wonderful in heaven, and I can hear
The murmuring of osier-hidden Aube
Who greets me as an unforgotten friend;
Oh, would I were the boy his playfellow.

MME. RICORDIN.¹⁸ My well-belovéd, thou art but
a boy

Still, still to me, though France's man of men ;
For France, by all thy care and love of me,
I pray the Virgin guard thee.

Is there sign
Of ebbing strife in Paris, is all well ?
Is Robespierre thine enemy or friend ?
A hundred doubtful rumours reach Arcis.

DANTON. Ay, mother, all goes well ; the Gir-
ondins—

But I am tired of Paris fume and fret,
Cabals of Paris, Paris coteries,
To-night a truce to Paris : oh, 'tis sweet,
To have thee, mother, at my side again,
With these dear arms encircling me, at home.

THE SAME

Morning

MME. RICORDIN. Methinks thou lovest not these
Girondins.

DANTON. I pity them. I do not love them. No,
It ill becoms our generous Gironde

To call them by her name, their name should
be

Buzotins, Brissotins, or Rolandins,¹⁹
Who love each other ev'n as cat and dog ;
There's Barbaroux, whom their Arch-pythoness
Calls for his pretty face Antinous,
Barren of aught but froth and idle fire,
—Sheet-lightning which will never harm a
foe—

Louvet, the shrill-voiced atomy, half-mad,
And Vergniaud, whose honied tongue has
power

To move men only as they listen to it ;
She-males, he-females, every one of them,
Who will they know not what, still wavering
Like leaves to every wind. I love them not,
They love not me and put no trust in me ;
I fain would save them if they trusted me.

Enter A MESSENGER.

MESSENGER. Good news ! I bring good news !

DANTON.

What is it, friend ?

(MESSENGER. Justice is done ; the Girondins are
dead.

DANTON. Good news, thou knave ! and call'st
thou that good news ?

MESSENGER. The best, for they were factious.

DANTON. So are we,
And we deserve to die as much as they.
Away, thou art as hateful as thy news.)
Mother, I must to Paris ; no more rest
Remains for me, I think, this side the grave.
[Exit.

THE 'COMITÉ DE SALUT' ²⁰

ST. JUST *enters and throws down papers on the table.*

ROBESPIERRE. What are these littered leaves?

Why thus distraught,

St. Just, when most we need calm conference?

These contra-ultra-revolutionists, ²¹

—Desmoulins with his fencing-tricks of pen,

And, with his felon counter-thrusts, Hébert,—

Menace the Revolution, menace us.

As yet they are like serpents half uncoiled

Or not full-grown, and we can draw their
fangs,

But only with calm counsel.

COUTHON.²²

Ay, be calm.

ST. JUST. Read this, and then preach calmness,
Robespierre.

Nay, let me read it, listen ye and judge

This latest, newest, Old Cordelier.²³

‘Of all the men alive on earth to-day,²⁴
Parisians, surely, should be happiest.
A tyrant slain, a cowed nobility,
A hundred fetters broken at a blow,
On all our frontiers all our enemies
Thrust back, and every faction stilled at home;
Yet here and there sound voices muttering
Against our guardian Twelve, as if forsooth
Their Argus eyes could be too vigilant,
Or could not judge ’twixt guilt and innocence.
Insensate voices! mark as I recall
A reign of terror in the days of old,
And learn thereby to measure and appraise
Your own good fortune and ingratitude.
A Roman is the teller of the tale,
Monotonous and like a funeral bell,
Of crimes that cost less happy men their lives.
Scaurus, thy verse ambiguous was—A Crime.
Silanus lived too lavishly—A Crime.
Petreius dreamt of Claudius—A Crime.
Pomponius gave to one, who had been friend
Of fallen Sejanus, bread and bed—A Crime.
Amid thine invocations pass unnamed
The Godhead of Caligula—A Crime.
(For that crime many men were torn with rods,
And some were sunken in the nether mine,

*Some sawn in twain, some thrown to the wild
beasts.)*

*To mourn a son like Fufius Geminus,
As mourned that Consul's mother, was—A Crime.
Mourn ! nay, if death's doom fell on kith or kin,
Men fain went radiant-faced or died themselves.
If you were popular you were—Suspect.*

The mob's applause portended civil war.

Did you seclude yourself, you were—Suspect.

The secretor the more notorious.

You were, because too opulent,—Suspect.

Gold's power and wealth were menace to the Prince.

You were, because too indigent,—Suspect.

As beggar 'twas that Sulla waxed so bold.

Low spirits, careless garb, bespoke your grief

Because the State was prosperous,—Suspect.

Austere as Brutus ! ay, you censure so

The Court's voluptuous luxury,—Suspect.

Ye Poets, Orators, Philosophers,

Would ye outshine the Emperor ?—Suspect.

The less a General's capacity,

The less, should he rebel, his following,

So all but mediocrity's—Suspect.

COUTHON [*aside*]. A word for Danton's friend
Dumouriez.²⁵

*To hold or shrink from office was a crime,
And if a man were incorruptible*

ROBESPIERRE. Hm !

COUTHON [*aside*]. A two-edged thrust, he plays
with sacred names.

*His crime was the most heinous crime of all.
They slew one for his name and lineage,*

COUTHON [*aside*]. (Orléans). ²⁶

*And one because the Empress liked his grounds,
And one because she did not like his face,
And hosts men knew not wherefore, were it not
That they were patriots and pure of life.
In brief, it was the strangest prodigy
To die among your friends or in your bed.*

O Paris, if such things were done in Paris,
What would not Paris say, and dare, and do ?
But, Paris, 'tis a tale I tell of Rome ;
All this was done at Rome, I say, at Rome,
A thousand years or more before to-day,
So, Paris, hear my parable of Rome.'

What now of calmness? Let his venom spirt
In this wise, and before the year is out
We shall be torn in pieces by the mob.

ROBESPIERRE. I know Camille, the man is as
the boy,

Vain as a woman, as a woman weak,
The voice of stronger men's opinions
And not his own, not championing a cause
Because of knowledge or belief therein,
But as most serviceable for display
Of trope and rhetoric and epigram.
Could he choose sides 'twould ever be the one
With amplest vantage-ground for scoff and
sneer

And parallels from old historians.
He would not sacrifice one showy quip
To save a nation—he's the pen of this,
But he who stirred the pen and spurred it on
Is Danton. I have pity on Camille,
As scorning him and as my schoolfellow,
But Danton—if we let that strong yeast work,
All France will be in ferment.

BILLAUD-VARENNE.

He must die.

COUTHON. Amen.

While Danton dreams, and half of Danton's
strength

Is fond men's faith, that he and he alone
Can clip those cruel claws ; pleasant to-day
Though this our warrant sound in Danton's ears,
To-morrow he will know it as his knell.

[*Exeunt.*

THE 'RUE ST. HONORÉ'

DANTON *and* CAMILLE DESMOULINS *walking together.*

DANTON. The die is cast ; for us and Robespierre
 'Tis death-grips now. I blame not thee,
 Camille ;
 Had I been thou I would have said the same ;
 To listen to that dreary drone of his,
 Interminably drawling through his teeth
 Sincerest-seeming insincerity
 And craftiest disparagement of all
 Who cannot stomach his predominance,
 Would stir the gorge of any honest man :
 And yet thou wert too hasty with that thrust,
 ' To burn is not to answer,'—instantly
 I saw his eyes green-glaring like a cat's ;
 He hitherto had hovered 'tween two minds,
 And would have burned the writing, spared
 the man ;
 Henceforth he is our foe.—My poor Camille !

A month since and that classic pen of thine
Blazoned abroad as demigod the man
Who saved Horatius keeper of the bridge,³⁰
And now his saviour stabs him in the back !
A blind seer was that Old Cordelier.

C. DESMOULINS. He saw and praised, at first. I
 had not thought
Four weeks would see him veer from south to
 north,
I know him better now, he would not risk
That righteous neck of his to save a world
Much less a friend.

DANTON. That precious neck of his !
One must not make the faintest scratch on it
For fear of making patriotism bleed.
The man has preached so long the only 'right,'
The only 'safe,' the only 'politic,'
That he has come to think omniscience
Is his and only his by right divine.
Therefrom the next step is but logical,
Omniscience should be omnipotent.
I smell dictator in this democrat,
This revolutionary paragon,
Immaculate and incorruptible,

And what not else. Good milk gone sour,
say I.

C. DESMOULINS. A sour look he would give thee,
if he heard.

Two deputies, of late, would speak with him,
And she who waits on him, Cornelia,
At first refused them entrance, 'the great man
Was not at leisure, they must bide his time.'
Entered at length they found him toileting,
He stood and sleeked the powder from his
face,

Towelled himself, and spat, and rinsed his
teeth,

With sidelong glances, ever, at the glass,
Like any coxcomb, deigning them no word
And scarce a glance, and when they left the
house

After some curt and futile colloquy,
Anon he followed, and, with chin in air,
As one who saw not, passed them in the
street.

DANTON. 'Twas so with me. I laid aside my
pride

And sought him, taking with me friend
Pâris,³¹

And, by the days when we had fought together,

And all the dangers we had shared together,

And most by her whom we had saved together,

—Enfranchised France—and almost on my knees

I prayed him, I adjured him once again

To save her, as my comrade, from the men

Who soiled her 'fore all Europe with their lies.

'Lies,' icily quoth he, 'whose lies, forsooth?

My speeches mean you? call them what you please.

Your Belgian mission may need christening,³²

And I in turn will call it what I please.'

This angered me, 'Aristocrats,' I said,

'Talk thus, and if tried patriots and true men

Are so assailed, and on the innocent

The Terror falls, as on our enemies,

Then woe to Liberty!' 'And who,' said he,

And flung me, as he spoke, a poisonous look,

Who told you any man that's innocent

Has suffered?' 'What, not one,' I said, 'not one!

Fabricius, what say'st thou?' and left him so.

C. DESMOULINS. Had ye remained he would have
preached to you
For hours, with his own virtue as his text,
And he emerges from his homilies
On others like a good man from a bath,
As if his own superior righteousness
Shone out the cleaner-polished for the plunge.
Prim as a boy, as man pragmatical,
Too timorous for ambition's dizzy crags,
And too ambitious for the lowlier vale,
The zealot in him grows half lunatic
With pampering his own imperiousness.
He wraps himself in gloom, perceives a plot
In every whisper, never owns a fault,
Will brook no opposition, nor forgive
A wound to his self-love, accuses men
For slight cause or for no cause, thinks the
world
Has only eye for him, and is, in brief,
So cross-grained, cankered, and cantankerous,
So full of spleen and spite and stuffed conceit,
That, wondering, we behold bestriding France
A monster half emerged from manikin.

DANTON. Whose maw, mayhap, will swallow thee
and me.

But I am sick to death of death and blood,
The streets and stones of Paris reek of it.
Billaud, St. Just, Couthon, and Robespierre
Are brothers Cain, the murderous four of them,
Who make the Revolution's name accurst.
But I will stay the slaughter or will die,
Better be guillotined than guillotine.

C. DESMOULINS. Couthon, St. Just—I know not
which has face
More beautiful or heart more merciless.

DANTON. Couthon! He's but an echo, ay or no,
To every ay or no of Robespierre.
He goes to bed if Robespierre is sick,
When Robespierre is well gets up again.³³
He'll serve us for a weathercock to show
Which way the shifting master-current blows.

C. DESMOULINS. Corpse-coloured Billaud's evil-
twitching face
I most mistrust of all, he hates us most.

DANTON. My secretary—'he, Billaud-Varenne'!
That was the crime he could not pardon me.

C. DESMOULINS. My sin was that I bruited
Dillon's jest ³⁴

About his turntail ardour in the war,
And that for vengeance, not as patriot,
I said he hunted Dillon to his doom.

DANTON. And now it is too late for words to
heal

Wounds made by words : so long as ran men's
talk

Of Robespierre and Danton, all went well,
But when twas 'Danton, Robespierre,' straight-
way

'Twas Robespierre's resolve to work me woe.

[*They part. CAMILLE DESMOULINS goes away,
humming to himself.*

C. DESMOULINS. Accusing me,
Accusing thee,
Accusing us,
Danton !
Jam pro.cumus
' Ucalegon.
Hébert aflare,

Certes the air is growing hot,
And soon they will accuse Bouchotte !³⁵

Why not Bouchotte ?
That raging, blazing patriot
Bouchotte.

THE 'COUR DU COMMERCE'

*A room with a piano, at which LUCILE DESMOULINS
sits, SOPHIE DANTON by her.*

LUCILE [*singing*]. 'Eyes that shone as sea-water
Sunlit on a summer day,
Nor could lover's lips aver
That his fondest memory knew
Of their depth the constant hue,
Was it blue engulfed in grey,
Was it grey embathed in blue.'

My poor Camille ! I called them foolishness
Those rhymes of his, when first he whispered
them
Amid the gardens of the Luxembourg,
'Nay, slander not thy loveliness, Lucile,
Which made and is the song, I made it not,'
He answered ; ah, I see his burning look
And feel his kisses now, though months seem
years

Since those first days of foolish, happy love.—
How cold the night grows!—would they were
at home!

[*Singing*]. 'The night is dark, the night is cold,
Pile the logs higher,
Close round the climbing fire,
Nor haste to venture out upon the wold
And, wandering, go
With dim eyes, desperate, through the blind-
ing snow.
Surely the night is dark and chill,
Oh, rest till stars return, and all the storm is
still.'

Why come they not? My life is one long fear
Since—ay, 'tis hardly twenty months ago
I watched with Gabrielle, as now with thee.³⁶

SOPHIE. Her fears that night were mine, and
hers my love,
Though then my own heart owned it not; to-day
I'm bold, for Danton's wife should know no
fear.

LUCILE. Thou art of sterner stuff than Gabrielle.
That night, that ninth of August, as she wept,³⁷

I laughed a weak girl's laugh hysterical,
And as she chid me, 'Ah,' said I, 'the laugh
Will end in tears, in tears.'

The streets were thronged
By shouting crowds, but over all their din
The tocsin sounded ; hastily Camille
Ran in and snatched his arms ; I breathed my
fears,

Apart, to him, and he would stay, he said,
—To soothe me—close by Danton ; like a rock
Stood Danton, firm and strong, and I took
heart :

They passed into the night, and on my knees
I wept before the window, Gabrielle
Mingling her tears with mine, and still we
heard

The funeral-terror of the booming bell.
At last came messengers—the people marched,
They said, to storm the Tuileries, Marseilles³⁸
With Paris echoing Danton's battle-cry,
'Strike, brothers, strike, for freedom and for
France.'

Anon a dreadful thunder shook the house,
'Cannon,' I cried, and forthwith Gabrielle
Fell, swooning, as one dead,—and ere the
Spring

She died,³⁹ but ev'n in dying breathed thy name
With Danton's, and adjured thee to become
A mother to his children :

How to-night
Teems with the phantoms of that other night,
And after-horror of the hundred hours
When every prison-threshold swam in blood.

SOPHIE. Blood laid to Danton's charge, as though
one man
Could curb the furious many-headed beast !

LUCILE. Pray Heaven these memories be not
ominous ;
Hush ! 'tis his step.

*Enter DANTON and DESMOULINS, looking harassed
and dejected.*

What is it ? Speak, Camille.

C. DESMOULINS. Speak, Danton.

DANTON. Speak ! I might as well be dumb,
My tongue has lost its virtue ; from the day
Héron⁴⁰ escaped us, saved by Robespierre,
The Assembly coldly hearkens, does not heed.

SOPHIE. It is not so : the Assembly as of old
Would listen to thee and would do thy will,
But thou by silence and long absences
Cheerest thy foes, dispiriting thy friends ;
Speak, act, and conquer, it is not too late.

DANTON. I know not ; all is dark ; 'tis partly true
Thy blame of me, but ev'n a Hercules
Had wearied of my task and longed for rest.
I shrank not while the common enemy
Tore France in hateful concert with her king,
But when no stranger stood within our gates,
When war had tamed La Vendée, and Mar-
seilles
Toulon and Lyons were won back again,
Then, France being free, I would myself be free,
Till Robespierre—but only yesternight
The same host asked us to his country-house,
And afterwards I rode with Robespierre
To Paris, and more like my friend of old
He seemed, and so he seemed, Camille, to thee ;
Were he at one with us, the Jacobins
Would falter not, and all might yet be well.
But since he left us, we have been on quest
To this and that friend, hoping we might glean
The meaning of the moody mutterings

And chilly looks and waggings of the head,
Which since Hérault's ⁴¹ arrest encompass us ;
We can learn nothing, but half-hearted friends
Seem quarter-hearted now, and edge away
As though to speak with us were dangerous.

C. DESMOULINS. 'Eat, drink to-night, to-morrow
death ;' be that

Our motto—nay, perhaps we bode too much,
Come, sing to us, Lucile, and exorcise
The evil spirit of this brooding Saul
With that soft voice of thine, and sing the song
I love the best of all, that garden-song,
That spring-song, love-song of the Luxembourg,
Ah Heaven ! to live again those happy hours
Amid the gardens of the Luxembourg !

LUCILE [*singing*]. Lisette,

My sweet,

Do you forget

How many an eve with flying feet
We stayed not, hurrying, till we met
Beside the trailed espalier-screen
In lengthening hours of later Spring,
When oak-buds all were yellowing,
And chestnut-fans were green ?

Do you remember or forget,
Lisette, Lisette ?

Lisette,
My sweet,
Do you forget
The night-dews after days of heat,
The leaves with flickering lights afret,
The airs that blew the leaves between,
The stars that seemed to smile and bless
A heaven of love and loveliness,
And you its radiant queen ?
Do you remember or forget,
Lisette, Lisette ?

Lisette,
My sweet,
Your eyes are wet,
Your softening looks my whispers meet
My sighs an answering sigh beget
For shining noons and nights serene,
For hearts of youth and hours of love,
For April grace of grass and grove,
When clouds were all unseen.
Ah, fool, to think you could forget,
Lisette, Lisette !

Enter A MESSENGER *with a letter to* CAMILLE
DESMOULINS *from his father.*

C. DESMOULINS. Oh, misery !
 ‘Thy mother is no more,⁴²
 And half my life is lost to me with her.’
 Oh, mother, mother !
 [*To LUCILE*] Read the rest for me,
 I cannot see.

FABRICIUS PARIS [*entering hastily*]. Fly, Danton ;
fly, Camille !
The warrant for arresting you is signed,
I come here at my peril ; haste, and fly.

C. DESMOULINS [*aside*]. While he yet spake, another
messenger
Came also unto Job.

DANTON. They would not dare.

SOPHIE. Out, and arouse the people; raise the
voice
Which never yet in danger rose in vain.
The people that thou madest will defend
Their maker; arm yourselves and us and them.

DANTON. More blood shed? Never. If there
must be more,
Mine be it; not a drop shall flow for me.

LUCILE. Oh, fly, Camille! and, Danton, fly with
him.
Waste not the precious hours.

DANTON. I will not fly,
I do not fear the scaffold, no, nor death,
I was not made for fear; and think ye I
Can carry France with me upon my shoes?

C. DESMOULINS. I go if Danton goes, and stay
with him.

DANTON. Life's not worth cowardice. I tire of
life.
Fabricius, never man had truer friend
Than we in thee, but hast thou certain proof?
Who told thee this?

F. PÂRIS. The clerk who saw them sign:
Billaud signed first.

C. DESMOULINS. The happier villain he!

F. PÂRIS. And Robespierre.

DANTON. Judas !

C. DESMOULINS. My schoolfellow !

LUCILE. And witness of our marriage !⁴³

F. PÂRIS. Even now
The bearer of the warrant may be nigh.

DANTON. So this was why he purred to me so
soft,

Who not a week before had shown his claws,
The tiger-cat, and I was tricked by him !
He might, I thought, cast in his lot with us
And thrust away the reptiles throttling him
If we could come to speech, but when I spoke,
Enumerating all the ills of France,
And could not stay my tears, 'The proud man
weeps,'

He said, and turned away contemptuously.
He must have feared what desperate men
might do,

Or else he had not baited yesternight
His trap so cunningly.

Ah, Robespierre,

A little while and every tongue in France
Shall curse thee for a tyrant, and the earth
Whereon thy house stands shall be sown with
salt,

Or branded 'Infamous' to passers by,
But France will say of Danton that he died
As he had lived, a friend to all her friends,
And her Republic's loyal citizen.

The film is off my eyes, it shames me now
To think I ever cringed to Robespierre,
Let him and his lame spaniel do their worst,
No fear of them shall rob me of my sleep.

I will to bed.

[*To his wife.*] Watch not too long, my sweet,
They will not dare, I say, they will not dare.

[*Exit.*]

F. PÂRIS. For all my fears it heartens me to see
Our careless, dauntless Danton of old days,
If fortune helps the brave, as proverbs say,
He yet may triumph.

SOPHIE.

If 'tis possible,
And thou mayst do so without jeopardy,
Dear friend, to-morrow bring us happier news.

[*Exit F. PÂRIS.*]

C. DESMOULINS. I, too, would sleep if sleep will
visit me,

There's comfort in oblivion ; come, Lucile.

LUCILE. Nay, love, I cannot sleep, we two will
watch. [Exit C. DESMOULINS.

Sore need they have of sleep ; when morning
comes

I will persuade them, yet, to hide themselves.

SOPHIE. And I, when morning comes, will counsel
them,

Re-manned by sleep and cheerier of heart,
To show themselves, and to the rescue call
All Paris ; Paris loves my Danton still.

THE SAME

Daybreak

LUCILE. See yonder faint pale streak ; it is the
dawn,

My heart grows lighter with the blessed light ;
Thank heaven the night is over ; we may hope,
Ah, surely we may hope the tale was false,

Or else, as Danton said, they have not dared.
What's that?

SOPHIE. What?

LUCILE. Listen; hearest thou that sound,
The tramp of marching men?—'tis nearer
now,—
And now it's at the threshold: quick, look
forth.

SOPHIE. Pâris spake true, the bloodhounds, they
are come.

THE LUXEMBOURG

Evening

BENÔIT *the Concierge talking with* HÉRAULT DE
SÉCHELLES.

BENÔIT. Thou still hast hope in Danton?

H. DE S. I had hope,
And so had he and so had all of us,
When last December's Old Cordelier
Rang Noel, Noel, Noel, in our ears,
But Spring has nipped that wondrous winter-
birth
And Hope's a starveling now that April's here.

BENÔIT. That 'Fourth' of them! all Paris went
clean mad,
As though it heard a message from the stars,
And all a street's length pressed the eager
crowd
A-tiptoe, clutching at each half-dried sheet,
A louis none too much for sight of it;

And when the prisoners knew, ah, Heaven !
you saw

A dancing light in men's dim eyes again,
And happy rain of tears on women's cheeks,
They thought their bolts and bars already
cleft

By that sharp-smiting Old Cordelier.

H. DE S. Well earned they were, the price, the
smiles, the tears,

Nor erred men overmuch who deemed its
words

Celestial-sweet as heavenly messengers.

Since first I looked on them before my eyes

They shine for ever written as in fire.

*' Have patience, brothers, ye shall yet be free,
For not by travail, nor with pangs and sighs
Grows Freedom slowly as a growing babe ;
She has no infancy and no old age,
Ye have but to desire her and your arms
Embrace her beauty ripe for your delight ;
Man's rights as man and laws as citizen,
Fraternity, divine Equality,
And Courtesy which, where the People rule,
All men revere and none may violate,*

*Attest her Goddess as she moves and reigns.
She is no thing of tattered tawdriness,
No marble image of eternal death,
Her statue, were it forty cubits high,
As David⁴⁴ purposed, still would be but stone ;
The opera harlot⁴⁵ in her flaunting car
Bare not her semblance ; base we were as beasts
To bow the knee to such divinities ;
Daughter of Heaven her names are Happiness,
Right Reason, Equity, Equality ;
And, O my brothers, by those sacred names,
And by our sacred bond of brotherhood,
Fling wide your prison-doors and let go free
Two hundred thousand citizens miscalled
Suspect ; suspicion Freedom deems no crime,
Nor hath she fetters save for criminals.
'Twill wound not the Republic, nay, it were
Salvation to her ; all your enemies
Ye think to slaughter by the guillotine,
But, know ye not, for every man ye slay
Ten others spring up, fired with tenfold hate,
A dreadful Cadmus-crop ? Are doting men,
Weak women, lackwits, laggards, dangerous ?
The only enemies within your gates
Are bed-rid men or fainthearts, all the brave
And strong have fled to foreign realms, or lie*

*In Lyons or La Vendée ; spare the rest,
Too poor a herd for ruthless punishment,
And add to your Committees yet this one
Of Clemency, last, best, and fruitfullest,
Since so ye conquer Europe, and in France
Stablish the Revolution for all time.'*

BENÔIT. A knightly bugle-blast !

H. DE S. Danton inspired
Desmoulius' lips, the tube through which it
blew.

Wherefore, till Danton falls, I still will hope.

[*The Court gates are opened, and DANTON and
C. DESMOULINS are brought in. The prisoners
throng round them, and DANTON bows and
laughs.*]

DANTON. I thought to have uncaged you,
Gentlemen,

But yesterday, and here I am, myself ;
Our turn may come to-morrow ; who can
say ?

Hérault, my friend !

H. DE S. What, Danton, art thou glad
To join us ?

DANTON. Fools, who smart for being fools,
Should never make wry faces. Laugh, and
life

Yields roses, though till death you're only fool.

[*To THOMAS PAINE.*] ⁴⁶ Good morrow, Citizen, a
luckier lot

Is thine than mine, for what I tried in vain
To do for my land thou hast done for thine,
Wherefore they send me to the guillotine,
Ah well, I shall go blithely.

[*To BENÔIT.*] I have heard
Of all thy courtesy and kindness
To these poor prisoners, and I am glad
To thank thee, though my thanks be proffered
here. [*They go inside.*]

THE SAME

Morning

BENÔIT *enters* DANTON's cell

BENÔIT. Thy sleep was sound.

DANTON. And dreamless ; death's own sleep
Cannot be sweeter : tell me of Camille.

BENÔIT. He has not closed his eyes, which stream
with tears.

And now he watches at the window-bars
Which front the gardens of the Luxembourg.
Lucile, his lone wife, wanders there, and each
With sad eyes searches for the other's face,
As seamen for a star amid the clouds,
And seeing them I almost wept with them.

DANTON. He loves life more than I, though I
too grieve

At leaving wife and babe, but when a life
Has dragged to dry-rot, better it should rot
Under the earth than on it; death's for all,
But oft-times there are other deaths than one—
You may die daily, some old part of you
Each day shed off,—the courage of your youth
Gone first, then faith, then open-heartedness,
Till he who once cast caution to the winds,
Spake all his soul, indifferent to blame,
Made friends, made foes, crossed swords, was
reconciled,

And nursed his pride of honour through it all,
Who, had he died in youth, had lived enshrined
In many men's affections, dismally
To crafty dotage moulders, all intent

On petty feats of dexterous finesse,
Vainglorious moderation, slippered stealth,
Fireside malevolence, and chuckled scraps
Of scandal, and, in brief, a base old age.

BENÔIT. Thou art too young to die—five years,
 short years
They seem, and hardly had I heard thy name.

DANTON. Five years, yes, if one counts them by
 the clock
That ticks off hours and minutes sluggishly,
But in those five years we have pricked and
 spurred
Time's laggard footsteps on five centuries.
Five years ago we breathed as breathe the
 beasts,
Ate, drank, as they do, yoked and chained as
 they,
We were not men—our homes, our wives, our
 lives
We held but at a master's will and pleasure ;
He took his toll of them, we had his leavings ;
To-day France stands unmanacled, and we
Who freed her, seal her freedom with our blood.

BENÔIT. When after bleak and stormy voyaging
The quiet harbour-water seemed so near !

DANTON. Ay, like a mariner is he who steers
A revolution,—long and hard his course,
And fierce from east and west and north and
south
And all points all at once the mad winds blow,
Yet oft the worst storm of the open sea
Has less of peril than the tranquil port
Whereto he hastes with all his canvas set ;
Its smile conceals a tiny tooth of rock,
And headlong down go captain, ship, and crew.

BENÔIT. Some said thou wert ambitious,— self
set first
France second,—so not I ; my eyes in thee
Read patriot, and a curse will fall on France
If she should let the man, that made her, die.

DANTON. France, Danton ; Danton, France ; the
two are one,
One as the body's members with the body,
One as the mind and brain incorporate,
One as the body and the soul are one ;
I tell thee, friend, I'd give my life for France,

Nor covet, so it served her, for the gift
Her grateful sons' remembrance : let my name
Be blighted, what care I if France be free ?
Ambitious ? ay, ambitious : is it a crime ?
In this world and our complex web of life
What acts are selfless wholly ? Toss a coin
To the blind beggar, inwardly forthwith
Your charity you pat upon the back
And strut the street with flag of conscience
high

As any peacock's feathery oriflamme.
Preach from the pulpit love is spiritual,
But, if you be not some Sir Galahad,
Your inmost soul will own your love half lust,
Its first crop passion, love the aftermath ;
Should men too nicely weigh and scrutinise
With close dissection and anatomy
Each motive for high action, they would end
In sick self-torture and insanity :
Enough if what we do is meet to do
And honour sanctions, and if that's ambition
I was the most ambitious man in France
Five years ago, and would be so again
Were I once free : my work is left half done,
The Commune's fire is spent, the Mountain
cowers

Before the Right ; the wolves, who hunt me
down,
Each on the other, ere my corpse is cold,
Will turn and rend themselves, and make of
France
A slave again ; I drag down Robespierre.

BENÔIT. They call me, I must go : my prisoner
Thou wilt not be for long if France is just.

THE SAME

CAMILLE DESMOULINS' *Cell.* *He hears a voice in the
next cell, and goes to an aperture in the wainscot.*

C. DESMOULINS. Who speaks ? I am a fellow-
prisoner.
Methinks I know that voice.

F. D'EGLANTINE.⁴⁷ Fabre d'Eglantine.

C. DESMOULINS. And I, Desmoulins ; whisper, I
can hear.

F. D'EGLANTINE. It is a ray of sunshine in the
cell
To be so near a friend : how can'st thou here ?

C. DESMOULINS. As thou ; the same assassins
signed my doom.

F. D'EGLANTINE. And Danton ?

C. DESMOULINS. Danton with me, overnight,
They also captured.

F. D'EGLANTINE. That means death for all.

C. DESMOULINS. Ay, and I thank my murderers
for this,
At least for this, that I shall die with him,
My noble Danton !

F. D'EGLANTINE. Did he not resist ?

C. DESMOULINS. No : there has been of late some
spell on him,
He might have balked the spite of Robespierre
Had he deserted me ; that would he not,
Danton being Danton and no recreant,
But neither would he break with Robespierre,
Or call his friends to arm, and so,—and so
The lion's in the toils : a sorry fate
To die at thirty-three ! the happiness

And freedom of our fellow-citizens
Was all we sought, and as our recompense,
—O barbarous ingratitude of man!—
Comes Sanson's axe.⁴⁸

Man's doom is it or God's?
Blood calls for blood, 'tis said, and Brissot's⁴⁹
death

Weighs down my spirit: I stood by like Saul
Consenting, nay, I cast the fatal stone.
I think there is a God, and He is just.

F. D'EGLANTINE. We need not yet despair, we
must be heard

Ere sentenced, and when Danton lifts his voice
They cannot stifle it, they would not dare.

C. DESMOULINS. So Danton said before they
captured him,
And yet they dared.

F. D'EGLANTINE. They have no evidence.

C. DESMOULINS. And need none: when had
Murder need of it?

F. D'EGLANTINE. Hush, I hear voices.

BENÔIT [*entering*]. Officers have come
To take thee to the Conciergerie.⁵⁰

C. DESMOULINS. Thence to the guillotine !

Lucile, Lucile,
My life, my love, my heaven on earth, adieu.
Oh, tell her that my thoughts were all of her,
And that her lock of hair is at my heart.
[*He, with DANTON, is taken to the Conciergerie.*]

DANTON [*as they enter*]. Twelve months ago I
reared with mine own hand
This revolutionary judgment-court,
May God and man forgive me for the sin.
And yet 'twas no exterminating scourge
I thought to fashion for my fellow-men,
But rather a strong rampart to ward off
A second red September ; all is now
A welter—not a leader left in France !
Ah, better the poor fisher's lot than his
Who meddles with the government of men.

THE CONVENTION

LEGENBRE ⁵¹ [*from the Tribune*]. Four of our
 fellow-members, Citizens,
 Have been arrested overnight, Danton
 Was one, who else I know not: I demand
 That they have audience here, and at this
 bar,
 That we adjudge their guilt or innocence.
 I am not of the schools, nor skilled in speech,
 So can but blurt out bluntly my belief
 That Danton is as innocent as I.

ROSSELIN [*aside*]. Well spoken, butcher.

LECOINTRE [*aside*]. Here comes Robespierre,
 He's moved, his colour wavers, and he goes,
 Without his wonted poem of self-praise,
 Straight to the point.

ROBESPIERRE. The question, Citizens,
 Is this, Shall certain men prevail o'er France,

Or France o'er them ; Danton, himself, pro-
posed,

What now Legendre proposes, for Bazire :⁵²

And will you now grant what you scouted
then,

Pandering to ambitious hypocrites?

[*Loud applause.*]

ROSSELIN [*aside*]. Our Incorruptible grows eloquent.

LECOINTRE [*aside*]. Legendre turns pale.

ROSSELIN [*aside*].

Danton a hypocrite !

ROBESPIERRE. Who cares for fine set speeches,
eulogies

Of self and friends, or boasts of what was done

At this or that time? What we need is, this—

The unvarnished record of their public life.

Legendre denies he knows what we all know,

That one of those imprisoned is Lacroix,⁵³

His bosom friend, the dissolute Lacroix ;

The reason's plain enough—for very shame

He durst not ask your favour for Lacroix,

But Danton's name he thinks is privileged ;

I tell him we will have no privilege,
No idols :

[*Loud applause.*

Shall an idol, rotten, rank,
Be shattered, or in falling shatter us
And, with us, France ? This day must settle it.
We will not have two measures or two weights :
Why favour Danton more than Pétion, ⁵⁴
Brissot, Chabot, ⁵⁵ Fabre d'Eglantine, Hérault ?
Shall we be first to violate the law
First framed within these walls, and now enforced,
—Equality for all,—or shall I make
Danton my shield and buckler, lest his lot
To day be mine to-morrow ? Friends of his
Have deluged me with importunities
And tearful obtestation of old times.
I answer, ‘ Perish friendship, perish life,
If conscience summons me and duty calls ’ :
I hold my life for France, my law is hers,
Death has no terrors if I die for her.

ROSSELIN [*aside*]. I thought his speech would not
for long forgo
That sing-song jargon of self-righteousness,
To hear him one would think in jeopardy

His neck not Danton's, ay, and that it was
A crown of honour to betray a friend.
Remorseless hypocrite ! thou well may'st need
That draught of water, lest these clotted lies
Should choke thee.

LECOINTRE [*aside*]. Hark, he has not finished yet.

ROBESPIERRE. We must act nobly, conquering all
fear,
The guilty, only, quake, as well they may,
On whom ere long must fall the afterstroke :
But there are spirits of another sort
In this Assembly, of heroic strain,
Which know no danger and will dare to guard
The guardians and the saviours of the State.
And few are all your enemies ; ourselves,
—This same Convention that they plot
against—
If ye stand firm, will front them fearlessly.

ROSSELIN [*aside*]. He flatters and he frightens in
a breath,
Hints safety's surest on the winning side
Though only peerless paladins can win ;

Who said the Nation's representatives
Would win through Europe credit and renown
Were Orléans elect ? ⁵⁶ Who saved Duport ?
Who cowered in August at Arcis sur Aube ? ⁵⁷
Who hastened, when he saw rebellion ripe,
To reap the fruit which patriots had sown ?
Who parleyed in the Temple with the Queen ? ⁵⁸
Who hoped to make a King of young Capet ?
Who craved for concert with the Girondins ?
Who boasted of his hatred of Marat ?
Who wrote to Wimpfen, ⁵⁹ championed Westermann, ⁶⁰

And clamoured for the head of Henriot ? ⁶¹
Thou, Danton, art the man. Conspirator,
Thou always hast conspired with all our foes,
At first with Mirabeau, then Orléans,
Dumouriez, next, and Brissot ; last, Hébert :
Traitor, and friend of every land but France,
As testifies the Embassy of Spain : ⁶²
False Citizen, whose plots and stratagems
Are known to Europe, known to all the world :
False friend, who did'st revile but yesterday
Desmoulins, thy weak victim, tool, and dupe .
Bad man, who said'st public opinion
Was but a strumpet, honour foolishness,
Futurity of after-fame a farce :

Defrauder, depredator, debauchee,
Whose luxury the public purse supplied,
Whose dinners cost a hundred crowns a head,
Whose guests, at each carouse, were English-
men ⁶³

Or infamous St. Amaranthe ⁶⁴ and Lacroix ;
For these and many other heinous crimes
Before the Revolutionary Court
We send thee, if thou can'st, to clear thyself,
If sentenced to abide thy well-earned doom.

ROSSELIN [*aside*]. St. Just's report is carried.

Act the First

Scene First of Robespierre's dictatorship !
We must attend the Court to see its close ;
Meet me betimes, all Paris will be there.

THE TRIBUNAL

ROSSELIN. Thou brokest tryst.

LECOINTRE. I feared our whispered words
In the Convention had been overheard,
And I was dogged by spies ;—'twas Pasquier's
house
They watched, and I am safe ; but I have
heard
By rumour only how the trial speeds !
And thou ?

ROSSELIN. Each hour I heard and witnessed all ;
The Court is thronged, we must not linger here,
Come, I will tell the story as we go.

LECOINTRE. What of the jury, are they honest
men ?

ROSSELIN. Packed slaves, whom Fouquier Tin-
ville⁶⁵ secretly

Empannelled in defiance of the law
 And not by lot,—one deaf, one imbecile,
 And all like Herman's⁶⁶ helper, Fleuriot,⁶⁷
 Creatures of Robespierre.

LECOINTRE.

Cold comfort, that !

ROSSELIN. I saw the prisoners escorted in,
 Fifteen, all told ; and each in turn being asked
 His age, abode, and name ; thus Danton made
 Disdainful answer to his questioner,
 ' My name is Georges Jacques Danton, my abode
 Will soon be nothingness, but I shall live
 In History's Pantheon.'

Westermann

Said, ' Strip me, let the people see my wounds,
 Seven all in front, and one stab in the back,
 Your work, to-day.'

' Jesus, the Sansculotte,

Was my age,' said Camille, ' a fatal age
 This "thirty three," to patriots.'

Man by man

As in a theatre, courting applause
 Each in his part, and each as though he had
 That hall for stage and France for audience,
 They answered ; and, as in a theatre,

The less precedes the greater, Herman first
Arraigned Fabre d'Eglantine, Philippeaux ⁶⁸
next ;

Then, at the name of Danton, all the Court
Thrilled as a tree's leaves at a sudden gust,
And in the stir I saw how Clerk Pâris
Ran and embraced him, and—accurséd sight—
How through the open casement glared the eyes
Of Vadier ⁶⁹ and Voulland and Amar
Gloating upon their victim ; but his eyes
Looked sternly back at them, till one by one
They slunk away as though they were accused
And he accuser, and to every charge,
—Embezzlement, venality, and theft,
Liberticide, and selfish cowardice,
Conspiracies with this man and with that,
With Mirabeau, the Court, and Orleans,
The Girondins, Dumouriez, Hébert,
And every foreign enemy of France,—
He flung back answer, now of irony,
And now of bitter scorn,

‘ The vile poltroons !

Let them appear and I will cover them
With ignominy : what care I for you
And for your sentence ? I am sick of life
And dread not death, but set us face to face,

I'll tear each foul accuser's mask away
And plunge the three of them—the shallow
knaves

Who fawn on and will ruin Robespierre,—
Back to their native nothingness again.

I hidden on the tenth of August, I!

Where are the heroes who unearthed me then
And shamed me by their matchless gallantry?

*I bought by bribes! I tell you men like me
In revolutions have a price by gold*

Not measurable, and upon their brows

Bear the sign-manual of Liberty.

From head to foot I shudder at this scroll

Of horrors, every line of it a lie!

They lie who say I am conspirator.

They lie who say I sought to sap the strength

Of your Committees; yours! nay rather, mine,

For I begat them: does a father slay

His offspring, think ye?

To conciliate

Is strength, not weakness, after the first throes

Of Revolution, and Revenge should cease

When Justice is no more in jeopardy:

And when I saw more rampant day by day

Passion and jealousy and private hates

I stood aloof, or sought to reconcile

All men to reason for the general good.
Nay, when mine own familiar friend invoked
The State's reversal of a private wrong,
I thwarted him and bade him bear his loss
As borne for Liberty, nor strive to make
A revolution's uniformity
As fixed as figures geometrical.
Great crimes, great criminals abounded still,
For them the young Republic could not wield
A sword too sharp, nor had I thought to blunt
Its edge, but I desired to see her move
To ever more majestic destiny,
No more impetuous and uncircumspect,
But proudly, incorruptibly austere,
Serenely and indomitably strong,
And with a large compassion, and with hands
Intolerant of fratricidal strife,
Heal widening wounds, rein wisely rearing
 France,
And make her an ensample to the world.
Wherefore because I would be no man's man
Nor league myself with any coterie,
But fought for France, France always, only
 France,
I am without a friend, and am become
This day a prey unto mine enemies.'

At this the President with peevish voice
Bade him 'be calm,' Desmoulins thereupon
Made mocking comment to the bystanders,
'*If preachers only preached the things they do,
Preachers were few.*'

But Danton heeded not ; still challenging
His chief accuser to stand forth in Court,
And, 'Ah, St. Just,' he cried, 'though silent
now,

Thou shalt not long be so, the people's eyes
Will open soon, and thou with all thy crew
Shalt by the people's hands be torn piecemeal.'
Each word be spake was passed from mouth
to mouth

Outside, and loud and louder swelled his voice
Till listeners heard it ev'n across the Seine,
Whereat, and at the murmurs in the Court,
Herman caught up his bell to silence him.
But Danton cried, 'A man's voice championing
His life and honour well may drown thy bell.'
And then each accusation, one by one,
Through every item of it great or small,
Truth twisted to untruth or naked lie,
He mauled and mangled so victoriously,
With such large mastery of where and when,
And such a wealth of reason-winning words,

That all the people in the court and street
Grew angrier and like to rescue him.
On every side I heard them murmuring
'They knew the man to be no anchorite,
No sentence-weighting smooth diplomatist,
No formalist, no reckoner of pence,
No faultless Pharisee or sinless saint,
Yet knew him hardy, open-hearted, prone
To take another's fault upon himself,
Fond lover of his wife and child and home,
Armer of France and Brunswick's ⁷⁰ vanquisher,
Who in his country's darkest hour took heart,
Made traitors cower and bade the desperate
dare,
And, if France feared one man's predominance,
They knew a man more dangerous than he.'
The judges heard and trembled as they heard,
And Herman, at a break in Danton's voice
Prayed him to rest awhile,—the hypocrite!—
And afterward wore out the weary hours
Sifting the lesser acts of lesser men.
And on the morrow, at the same demand
'Produce your witnesses,' when Herman said
'The whole Convention were his witnesses,
He would not, had not power to summon
them,

And one, though knowing him, he might not
name,'

Scoffs, murmurs, scornful laughter, answered
him,

Redoubled as Desmoulins' voice was heard,
'The council sought for witness and found
none

For many bare false witness ;' and again,
'Methodical, as woodman with his axe,
The Assembly fells its trees by strict routine,
'Tis our turn now ;' but neither taunts nor
prayers

Moved Herman, and with questions frivolous
Again he wore the weary hours away.

[They enter the Court.]

To-day will show what counsel night has
brought.

LECOINTRE. Danton must win, how pale and
tremulous

The judges look, and he how bold and gay.

[All the prisoners rise.]

DANTON. I speak for all my fellow-prisoners :
And first we call upon you to compel

The presence of your witnesses in Court,
And next, that the Convention be apprised
That we ourselves have proof of plots astir
To force on France one man's dictatorship.

[FOUQUIER TINVILLE *hesitates*. An OFFICER
summons him out of court and he finds
VADIER and VOULLAND.

VOULLAND [*showing a document*]. We have the
villains fast, read this and know
Thy difficulties vanished.

VADIER. It has edge
To gut this swelling turbot clean enough.

FOUQUIER TINVILLE [*reading in Court the Con-
vention's decree*]. 'Whereas a foul con-
spiracy and plot⁷¹

Has been discovered in the Luxembourg,
Whence Dillon, by Lucile Desmoulins lured,
Designed to break forth, free the prisoners,
And slay our two Committees, 'tis hereby
Decreed by the Convention, each accused
Who renders not due honour to the Court
Shall forfeit further right of self defence.'

DANTON. Be witness every man within this hall

We neither make resistance nor insult
Our judges : be it soon or late the truth
Will come to light ; but O unhappy France,
I see unnumbered woes in store for thee ;
Dictatorship has cast aside its mask
And stands forth visible—see where its tools,
Yon murderous cowards, dog us to the grave.
[*Pointing to AMAR and VOULLAND who slink away.*]

C. DESMOULINS. Fiends, devils, will my blood
not satisfy
Your thirst, that you must slay my wife with
me ?

PEOPLE. Shame ! Tyranny ! Produce the witnesses !

HERMAN. I close this sitting.
[*To the officers*]. Haste, and clear the Court.

ROSSELIN. The jurors fear the people.

LECOINTRE. Ay, but fear
To-morrow will be lost again in hate.

THE SAME

Next morning

JURORS. We claim by right of yesterday's decree
To close the trial, we have heard enough.

DANTON. Ended ! the trial has not yet begun.
Ye have heard nothing ; would ye sentence us
Without a hearing, without witnesses ?

C. DESMOULINS [*clinging to the bench*]. Help, help,
good people ! they would butcher us.
I will not go. Your force may tear me hence,
Naught else. Help, help, all friends of liberty !
[*He is dragged away.*]

ROSSELIN. Horrible !

LECOINTRE. Is the verdict past all hope ?

ROSSELIN. I hear strange rumours, Herman has,
'tis said,
A letter to some foreign enemy
Written by Danton.

LECOINTRE. Forged by Danton's foes !
The jurors will not on his unproved word
Accept it.

ROSSELIN. Vadier and Voulland have gone
To overawe the waverers—three or four
Who dread the people's wrath : but here they
 come,
Trinchard, the foreman, with an evil smile
Foreboding ' Guilty ' ere he utters it.

HERMAN. Convey to each and all of the con-
demned,
The verdict and our sentence—instant death.
 [The Court is cleared.]

ROSSELIN. With Danton's life the Revolution dies ;
He bore it up as Atlas bore the world
Upon his shoulders, none can prop it now.

LECOINTRE. Nay, but the Revolution is not dead.
He forged it as a God his thunderbolt
Instinct with his own elemental fire,
And in the trail of its amazing flight
The clouds of all the centuries, aflame,
Rekindle on and on the blaze thereof,
A light to lighten France and all the world.

THE GUILLOTINE

The wives of DANTON and DESMOULINS in a house in the Cour du Commerce. FABRICIUS PÂRIS comes in.

LUCILE. At last !

F. PÂRIS. What ye commanded I have done.

LUCILE. Oh, tell us all, spare nothing, let my tears
 Not hinder thee ; I cannot choose but weep,
 But I am strong to listen, every word
 That fell in death from my belovéd's lips
 And every act of his I would enshrine
 In bitter-sweet remembrance.

SOPHIE. I who live
 For vengeance, I, too, pray thee tell us all.

F. PÂRIS. I waited by the Conciergerie,
 One of a mighty crowd : therefrom anon

Rolled forth two tumbrils, and in one of them
Stood all our dear ones, chained, and I could
see,

Camille's head leaning upon Danton's breast.
At sight of Danton, from the surging throng
Rose shouts for the Republic, and I heard
Two ruffian voices near me taunting him
In hideous mockery of Holy Writ,
'Thou saviour of another save thyself,
Or thou must die, My Lady's Gentleman,
Long live our great Republic, thou must
die.'

I saw the scornful smile on Danton's face
Darken into a frown. 'Brute beasts,' he said,
'Belching out mockery of dying men,
Ye howl for the Republic—in one hour
It will be headless.'

Angrily the guard
Spurred on the horses: I kept pace with them,
And as we neared the house of Robespierre
I saw closed doors and every window barred,
And sudden silence froze the ribald mob
As though it saw a spectre, but Camille,
His hoarse voice heard of all men in the hush,
Cried, 'Not for long, assassin, not for long
Shalt thou outlive us.'

Soon we reached the Square
Which bears in bitter memory of Lambese⁷²
The Revolution's name ; a heaving sea
Of heads it seemed, and, stormy as the sea,
The maddening music of the Marseillaise
Half drowned the brute mob's jeers and
blasphemies ;

Camille shrank shuddering at the sound of it,
Then strove to wrest the fetters from his hands,
Struggling and writhing, with his breast half
bare

And raiment rent, crying out terribly,
' People, or fools befooled by murderers,
Your servants, 'tis your servants that they slay.
Who summoned you to arms in Eighty-nine ?
Who gave you for your watchword, " Liberty,"
For badge, the leaves of green ? Here stands
the man,

Camille Desmoulins, I who speak, am he.
Pity for others is my only crime.'
He thought to move the crowd, which flung
back jeers,

And I heard Danton say, ' Be calm, my friend,
Heed not this scum ;' and then, in low, sweet
tones,

' Our task is ended, let us take our rest.'

Hard by the 'Café of the Regency'
Stood painter David, with a devilish jest
Upon his lips, and in his gloating eyes,
Unsatisfied, a devilish lust of blood,
Outlining swiftly what shall one day be
His victims' semblance for the curious eyes
Of after ages ; 'Lackey !' Danton said,
And at that name of scorn he shrank abashed,
And knew himself by every son of France
In every generation yet unborn
Acclaimed as artist but accursed as man.
The sun, by this, was burnishing the west,
And Freedom's statue reddened in its fire
As though 'twere stained with blood, or
 blushed for shame ;
From every terrace of the Tuileries
Rose odorous breath of lilacs blossoming,
And in the glorious light the guillotine
Stood frowningly affronting the sweet heaven,
Whereon Hérault climbed first, his radiant face
Unblanched, nor showing any sign of fear,
Nay, smiling answer as a white hand waved
From some far balcony a last adieu.
Him striving to kiss Danton as he passed
The headsman thrust with violence away ;
'Thou fool,' said Danton, 'hinder if thou canst

Our heads from meeting yonder in the sack.'
Next came Lacroix and after him Camille,
Who murmured bitterly, 'To such an end
Comes Freedom's first apostle,' so he died,
The last word on his lips thy name, Lucile.
Alone stood Danton, after every friend
Had heard his words of comfort (they the
more

In grief for him that he must see them die),
Like some sole column in an earthquake-shock
All motionless, till Sanson summoned him ;
Then standing at full stature, instantly
He strode up to the scaffold, seen of all,
The dying Titan, in the dying sun
Which shone in all its splendour on his face,
And at the shout that rose he smiled and
sighed,

Whispering softly, 'O my wife, my love,
Must I no more behold thee?' then, aloud,
'No weakness, Danton,' and with lion's roar
Which pealed in all men's ears in all the Square,
He thundered to the executioner,
'Show them this head of mine, 'tis worth the
pains,

Such heads the people see not every day.'

SOPHIE. My hero !

LUCILE. All our love and gratitude,
O best of friends, I cannot utter now,
I have no strength ; ah, would I had no life !

OFFICER [*entering*]. Lucile Desmoulins, this for
thine arrest
We bear as warrant, thou must come with us.

LUCILE. Oh, thanks, thanks, thanks, oh, welcome, gentlemen,
The holy angels could not bring from heaven
Tidings of greater joy ; a few short hours
And I shall see him, see Camille again !
My God, I thank thee ; Thou hast heard my
prayer.

PART II

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*Two of the above are reprinted from LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE
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ANDRÉ'S RIDE

When André rode to Pont-du-lac
With all his raiders at his back,
Mon Dieu, the tumult in the town !
Searee clanged the great portcullis down
Ere in the sunshine gleamed his spears
And up marched all his musketeers,
And far and fast in haste's array
Sped men to fight and priests to pray !
In every street a barricade
Of aught that came to hand was made,
From every house a man was told,
Nor quittance given to young or old ;
Should youth be spared, or age be slaek,
When André rode to Pont-du-lac ?

When André rode to Pont-du-lac
With all his ravening reiver-pack,
The mid lake was a frozen road
Unbending to the cannon's load,
No warmth the sun had as it shone,
The kine were stalled, the birds were gone,

Like wild things seemed the shapes of fur
With which was every street astir,
And over all the huddling crowd
The thick breath hung a solid cloud,
Roof, road, and river—all were white,
Men moved benumbed by day,—by night
The boldest durst not bivouac,
When André rode to Pont-du-lac.

When André rode to Pont-du-lac
We scarce could stem his swift attack ;
A halt, a cheer, a bugle-call,—
Like wild cats they were up the wall ;
But still as each man won the town
We tossed him from the ramparts down,
And when at last the stormers quailed
And back th' assailants shrank assailed,
Like wounded wasps, that still could sting,
Or tigers, that had missed their spring,
They would not fly, but turned at bay,
And fought out all the dying day.
Sweet saints ! it was a crimson track
That André left by Pont-du-lac.

When André rode to Pont-du-lac,
Said he, ' A troop of girls could sack

This huckster town that hugs its hoard
But fears to face a warrior's sword.'
It makes my blood warm now to know
How soon Sir Cockerel ceased to crow,
And how 'twas my sure dagger point
In André's harness found a joint,
For I who now am old was young,
And strong the thews were, now unstrung,
And deadly though our danger then,
I would those days were back again ;
Ay, would to God the days were back
When André rode to Pont-du-lac.

HAY-TIME

HEY, lads ; ho, lads ;
Why are you so slow, lads ?
Darkly the shadows creep over the day,
The oxen all bellow,
The sunset 's all yellow,
Rain is a-coming to ruin the hay.
You mischievous lasses,
That scatter the grasses,
Let the lads bustle, have done with your play ;
You pitchers and rakers,
You merry haymakers,
Load up the wagon and home with the hay !

Nay, Joe ; stay, Joe ;
Never slip away, Joe ;
Must you be tied like a sow by the leg ?
While you are a-drinking
The sun 'll be sinking,
Work must be done before tapping the keg.

You mischievous lasses,
 That scatter the grasses,
Let the lads bustle, have done with your play ;
 You tossers and takers,
 You merry haymakers,
Clear the Four-Acres, and home with the hay !

 Soa, ' Dobbin ' ; woa ' Dobbin ' ;
 'Tisn't time to go, Dobbin,
Wait till the wagon's heaped higher than now,
 At home, in a minute
 You'll have your nose in it,
Grudging a morsel to Grizzle, the cow.
 You mischievous lasses,
 That scatter the grasses,
Let the lads bustle, have done with your play ;
 You pitchers and rakers,
 You merry haymakers,
Load up the wagon and home with the hay !

 Fie, Molly ; why, Molly,
 Clamour so, and cry, Molly,
' Pudding a-spoiling and pies getting cold ' ?
 You ninny to grumble
 When thunderstorms rumble ;
There's the first drop as you dawdle and scold.

You mischievous lasses,
That scatter the grasses,
Let the lads bustle, have done with your play ;
You tossers and takers,
You merry haymakers,
Clear the Four-Acres, and home with the hay !

Rough, Johnny ? Stuff, Johnny !
Never mind a cuff, Johnny,
She 'll come a-coaxing you soon by the barn,
You catch her and kiss her,
There 'll none of us miss her,
Dick 'll be singing or Jock at his yarn.
You mischievous lasses,
That scatter the grasses,
Let the lads bustle, have done with your play ;
You pitchers and rakers,
You merry haymakers,
Load up the wagon and home with the hay !

Oh, Gaffer ; go, Gaffer ;
Don't worry so, Gaffer ;
Off to the Missis, you hinder us here,
Just hurry and tell her
To fetch from the cellar
Prime of the cider and best of the beer.

You mischievous lasses,
That scatter the grasses,
Let the lads bustle, have done with your play ;
You tossers and takers,
You merry haymakers,
Clear the Four-Aeres and home with the hay !

Quick, lads ; thick, lads,
Pile it on the rick, lads,
Neatly and nattily comb it away,
And show me to beat it
When we can complete it,
Neater or sweeter or wholesomer hay.
You mettlesome lasses,
That clatter of glasses
Calls you to supper, go make yourselves gay ;
You shakers and rakers,
You jolly haymakers,
Lustily strike up the song of the hay !

TIT FOR TAT

CHAFFINCH and Linnet and Sparrow,
 You that have chosen my field for your nests
 Over its jungle of foxtail and yarrow,
 Hear what I promise my guests.

Safe shall you be from all furry
 Quadrupeds hungrily roaming for prey,
 Safe from the urchins who harry or hurry
 Hens getting ready to lay.

All the day long at your leisure
 Lying-in beds shall you fashion at ease,
 Mosses and thatches I yield to your pleasure,
 Buds you may pluck from my trees.

Flower of my garden and fruitage—
 Worm that is luscious and succulent slug—
 Seeds never grudged though I watch their up-
 rootage—
 Nestage in box-bushes snug—

Crumbs set apart from my table
Largesses warranted never to fail—
Wealth of the kitchen and warmth of the
stable—
Water in saucer and pail—

Thickets at will for your quarters—
Meadowland-forage and granary-spilth—
Grace of my sons and the smile of my daughters—
Tithe unabridged of my tilth—

All of such bounty I proffer,
Board, bed, and lodging, and all of it free,
If with reciprocal trust to my offer
Dear little birds you agree.

First, though the eyes of a stranger
Come not a-nigh you to vex and affright,
My daily visit you'll deem not a danger,
Chirruping only delight

When, with a gentle removal
Pushing the branches asunder, I peep
Into your soft little beds at the oval
Shells where your embryos sleep.

Ay, or when feathered they linger
Now but a day after nurture of weeks,
Should I essay to allure with a finger
Gaping of wide yellow beaks.

Next,—and a strict stipulation
This you shall keep on the faith of a bird,—
Morning and evening in joint jubilation
All of your songs shall be heard,

Morning and evening in chorus
Ringing in rapture around and above,
Singing to earth and the heaven that is o'er us,
Love in requital of love.

BULL POINT

FREE, free at last from bleak duresse,
And Winter's weary listlessness !
The meadows decked in merrier dress
 Away their sables fling,
To-day the world's all wonderment,
And bird-throats half with rapture rent
Acclaim the first, fresh, innocent,
 Surprise and smile of Spring.

But not to-day the fields for me
Whose buds still shiver on the tree,
This basking rock that cleaves the sea
 Stores more of April's sun.
Here all a noontide hour I lie,
Content to scan the cloudless sky
Or watch the shining ships go by
 And count them one by one.

One constant course the steersmen take
Alternate in the leader's wake,
Dumb glides the barque, its followers break
 Through louder lanes of foam,

And, as their labouring engines pant,
Off skims the startled cormorant,
And gulls with ivory wings aslant
Inlay the heaven's blue dome.

O laggard barque ! O slugabed !
For all your bellying canvas spread,
No longer in the line you led
You boast the pride of place,
Fast, faster, as you drift forlorn,
With iron nostrils snorting scorn,
In turn is every rival borne
Far past you in the race.

Now all are gone ; a hush profound
Ensues as of enchanted ground,
Save only one continuous sound
Which no man's tongue may tell,
Which none but twain can weave for us
In measures multitudinous,
To music of Elysium thus,—
The Sea and the Sea-shell.

The quivering brine 's a silken sheet
A-glitter as with August heat,
The sands its winking wavelets meet
Like polished silver glow,

And sunken in pellucid green
Of cool clear pools the rocks between
Are lengths of lazy seaweed seen
Soft-swaying to and fro.

Beneath me, huge and bare the ledge
That rakes the air with ragged edge,
Then plunges, like a giant's wedge
From glory into gloom :
Above, in haunts of winter rain,
Which ivy drapes or lichens stain,
With shyly smiling buds again
The sea-pink stars the combe.

O glorious headland of the west,
Of all her headlands lordliest,
Illimitable from thy crest
The broadening Channel seems,
The Bull's horns fiercely toss the spray,
The Death-rock frowns beyond the bay,
And mistier Hartland far away
Conceals a coast of dreams.

I gaze and gaze—the swallows sweep
Close by me, close the conies creep,
They take my trance for death or sleep,
So carelessly they roam ;

Fain would I linger on, but lo !
The sun dips, chill the sea-air blows,
'Tis time to rise and saunter slow
By inland paths for home.

A WILTSHIRE SCENE

OLD Friend, while twenty years and more
Have, fleeting, left our temples hoar,
How many a morning holiday,
When all adust the township lay,
Our feet have trod the airier way
 To Rockley Wood.

In Rockley Wood a pasture lies,
Lawn, opening only to the skies,
So close its columned warders cling ;
A fearless song the finches sing
To careless squirrels listening,
 In Rockley Wood.

But climb the Down and lo ! displayed
The hoarded glory of the glade,
Those miser pines such store untold
Of budding buttercups enfold,
Of buttercups that glow like gold
 In Rockley Wood.

There when October suns expire,
The fading foliage turns to fire,
As, rivalling the dying rays,
Light thrills to light, blaze answers blaze,
With hues that blind you as you gaze
On Rockley Wood.

Light thrills to light and dies away,
But out the conies frisk for play,
Or sit, upreared, in voiceless talk
Till alien sounds the conclave balk,
And back they scurry to the chalk
Of Rockley Wood.

Too brief, poor things, your happiness,
Too soon the eager foe will press
To make those glancing scents their mark ;
O day of death and terror ! Hark,
The sudden gun, the short, sharp bark
In Rockley Wood.

But hence, ill-omened thought of death !
'Tis life to breathe the Down's rich breath,
And all an idle morning lie
On couch of silk-soft euphrasy,
Or milkwort mirroring the sky
Of Rockley Wood.

The Down—that ere the Summer's gone
Will yet another livery don,
Blue scabious, bluer harebell, blent
With myriad tress of tasselled bent
And rockrose, all the parched ascent
From Rockley Wood.

The Down—while yet you dream—a-thrill,
As yonder racers round the hill :
Bright beauties slim and debonair,
They snuff the breeze, they tread on air
Mad for a long, strong gallop there
By Rockley Wood.

And as their lissome pasterns pass
Up starts the plover from the grass,
The hare's afoot, the hawk's astir,
And pairing partridges defer
Their converse sweet and downwards whirl
To Rockley Wood.

Shall we with them, or lingering stay
Till vesper shadows darken day
And shepherds rise and plodding slow
With bustling Prince and Keeper go
To fold the full-fed flock below,
Nigh Rockley Wood?

Yon cottage-fires for them anew
Raise not to heaven those spires of blue,
This hut's their home, that camp of straw
Will shield the sheep though sharp and raw
The winds of evening westward draw
To Rockley Wood.

They go, and dumb grows Down and Dell,
And hushed the day-long-tinkling bell,
The moon is up, clear-scarped and white,
The chalk-track glistens in her light,
'Neath moon and star we bid good night
To Rockley Wood.

FORTEM POSCE ANIMUM MORTIS
TERRORE CARENTEM

As down Time's deepening current we descend,
 And nigher know its end,
 Though slow the moments, faster speed the years,
 And, deafer though our ears,
 They hear beyond the verge of life's last tract
 The roaring cataract
 Louder and ever louder, and our gaze
 Can pierce the distant haze
 To one point where the vessels we have known
 And cherished as our own,
 Though trim to view and staunch as heretofore,
 Vanish and are no more.
 That wonder of the waters, glorious,
 What lights its lamps for us !
 And answering what gay music from its deck
 We dreamed not aught could wreck
 Our pilot so securely moving on,
 When suddenly 'tis gone !

Then in a moment all the world seems changed,
 Alien, aloof, estranged ;
The comfort and the splendour of the sun
 Fast fade, and one by one
The clouds loom dull and leaden, and the breeze
 Is choked amid the trees ;
If in their branches any note is heard
 'Tis but the mocking-bird,
And in the thick mute mist we lose all heart
 To steer by any chart,
So close the unknown ocean and so poor
 Our vision once so sure.
' For all men 'tis appointed once to die,'
 The sentence seemed to lie
On others, not on us, till this man died,
 Now shattered is our pride,
And nowhere know we safety, as our bark
 Drifts down into the dark.
' Nay, if to-morrow comes imperious Death,'
 The rebel in us saith,
' To eat and drink were better while we may,
 The children of a day
Should eke the daylight out with song and feasts,
 Nor heed the fabling priest's
Assurance of some after counterpoise
 To earth's relinquished joys ;

For life and death are blind lots drawn by chance,
The bars of circumstance
A cage, wherein with self-inflicted pain
We bruise ourselves in vain ;
Better be first to clutch the richest bone
The keeper's hand has thrown,
Or on our fellow-captives better still
To work our wild-beast will :
Though virtue spangle the romaneer's page
Vice is our heritage,
And powers unseen with irony malign
To each his share assign ;
The headlong venture on a hope forlorn
Of vanity is born,
The reddest murder stains not midnight-time
With more essential crime
Than hate, inert, 'neath interposing ice
Of saving cowardice :
The wisest he who revels out his span
With cup and courtesan,
By prudence, only, fettered, not by awe
Of superstition's law :
Truth is not, faith is folly, love is lust,
Man's doom is "dust to dust" ;
Better to pluck life's roses, while remains
Warm blood within our veins.'

Hush, voice ignoble ! worse were lawless sense
 Than chill indifference :
What though the ancient mystery of Will
 And Fate elude us still,
And they that on their voyage farthest go
 Know best that least they know ?
What though, like any fool foredoomed to err,
 The sage philosopher
Be impotent to mete the more or less
 Of sin and sinlessness,
Of shame and laurelled glory, or, 'mid all
 Temptation great and small,
To track each antecedent of the blood
 Which stirs to bad or good
Coward or hero, crafty Belial,
 Or sweet Sir Percival ?
Nay, what though, with a vision past our dreams,
 Some vaster knowledge deems
The best man only better than the worst,
 The last behind the first
A handbreadth only, smiling where we frown
 And spurning those we crown ?
Shall man,—because a God's is not his ken
 To judge his fellow-men,
Omniscient, comprehending germ and whole,—
 Shall man dethrone his soul ?

Enough for us the common wisdom taught
By humbler homelier thought,
To love, to labour, to be just and true
In all we think and do,
To make, if meet, the present's pain at last
Redeem a bankrupt past,
And, for the future, if beyond our scope
Be faith, to welcome hope.
He who abhors the gauds ambition yields
On blood-red battlefields,
But at his country's call or Right's alarms
Alert will stand to arms ;
Who braving, rather than his own soul's blame,
The lions and the flame
Bows not to Baal, nor would worship did
Nebuchadnezzar bid ;
(And, if the crowd be tyrant, with a proud
Disdain defies the crowd ;)
Who robs not Naboth, nor at lucre's lure
Unpitying grinds the poor,
But clothes the naked, and the hungry feeds,
And binds the wound that bleeds,
Loving his kind, nor torturing the weak
Creature that cannot speak ;
This man—who doth to others what he would
To him that others should,

And worships more than any King or Queen
 A conscience clear and clean—
Whether a hero's be his shining lot
 Or peasant's in his cot,
Has known the athlete's joy whose weakness long
 Self-conquest has made strong,
And learnt life's purpose better than by rules
 Of all the creeds and schools.
Wherefore, when out of darkness beckoneth
 Inexorable Death,
Even with the roaring torrent in his ears,
 His soul shall know no fears,
Nor overmuch be sad, though at the end
 Bereft of every friend,
But bold for any future, and still fast
 Its bright flag at the mast,
Will meet the call, and dauntless though alone
 Embark on the Unknown.

NOTES

¹ Born at Arcis sur Aube, 1759. 'Avocat' at Paris, 1780. Worked hard, and prospered in his profession. Well read in history and classical, Italian, and English literature. Married Mdlle. Charpentier, 1787, dowered with 20,000 livres. She died while he was in Belgium, and he had her body exhumed that he might see her again. Married Mdlle. Gély, 1793. (The character I have assigned to her is imaginary.) A politician of mark in 1790, in 1791 he was a power in Paris, and in 1792 the greatest statesman and orator in France. Was an ardent patriot, unswayed by personal prejudice, defending, though he disliked, Marat, and trying to come to terms with the Girondins. Had a tolerant, easy temper and domestic tastes. Readers of his speeches admire their strong common-sense more even than their eloquence. Guillotined, 1794.

For the matter of many of these notes I am indebted to Mr. Morse Stephens' *Orators of the French Revolution*. 'They are merely meant to spare some readers some trouble.

² These 'market-women or knitting-women had been treated as heroines ever since their march to Versailles in October 1789.' Some would sit round the guillotine, knitting, during the executions.

³ *i.e.* prayer. 'Sanson' was the name of the executioner.

⁴ The palace used as a prison during the Revolution.

⁵ For the story of the purchase of a diamond necklace by the Cardinal de Rohan as a love-gift to Marie Antoinette, and the concomitant intrigues, in which the notorious impostor Cagliostro was mixed up, see Carlyle's *Essays on the Diamond Necklace*, and *Cagliostro*.

⁶ 'Le tocsin qu'on va sonner n'est point un signal d'alarme, c'est la charge sur les ennemis de la patrie.'—Danton's Speech, September 2, 1792.

⁷ Billaud-Varenne, the most sanguinary of the Terrorists. He repented at last of having compassed Danton's death.

⁸ See Note 20.

⁹ Member of the Assembly, politically opposed to Danton, but whose life Danton saved by preventing him being brought to Paris in spite of the Commune's orders.

¹⁰ The Paris market-women, who 'went about the streets insulting respectably dressed people, and hounding on the sansculottes to deeds of atrocity.'

¹¹ Nickname of Marie Antoinette in allusion to Louis XVI.'s power of vetoing the national enactments.

¹² To 'thou,' 'thee,' was a mark of a good republican. Robespierre was partial to the aristocratic 'you,' just as he continued to use hair-powder when it was tabooed.

¹³ The name of Hébert's journal, and his own nickname.

¹⁴ Charlotte Corday, who murdered Marat.

¹⁵ A fashionable and expensive restaurant said to have been frequented by Danton.

¹⁶ A Court so called from its sittings being held in the Grand Châtelet, one of the two Paris forts of that name.

¹⁷ Men from Marseilles had come to Paris in June and July, and were foremost in the attack on the Tuileries, August 10th, 1792.

¹⁸ Danton's mother, who married M. Ricordin after her first husband's death, lived at Arcis sur Aube, where Danton was born.

¹⁹ Buzot, Brissot, Roland, Barbaroux, Vergniaud, Louvet, were leading Girondins. The meeting-place of the younger Girondins was Madame Roland's salon.

²⁰ Originally a Committee for considering such questions as did not fall to other Committees. After various changes, the

members of what is known as the Grand Committee of Public Safety consisted of Twelve.

²¹ The 'Contras' may be described as those who thought the time for mercy and moderation was come, the 'Ultras' those who thought their Utopias could only be reached by more bloodshed.

²² Robespierre's 'seconde âme.' Member of the Convention and the Comité de Salut. Paralysed. He and St. Just sided with Robespierre against Danton.

²³ Name of the journal founded by C. Desmoulins in 1793, he being one of the original members of the Cordelier Club.

²⁴ 'Of all the men.' Only the italicised lines are from the Old Cordelier,—paraphrased.

²⁵ The republican General at Valmy and Jemappes who finally deserted.

²⁶ Guillotined November 1793.

²⁷ C. Desmoulins had written :—On voit qu'il regarde sa tête comme la pierre angulaire de la République, et qu'il la porte sur ses épaules avec respect et comme un Saint Sacrement.

²⁸ Ce bilieux patriote. Le patriote rectiligne.

²⁹ A cant phrase for being guillotined.

³⁰ C. Desmoulins had extolled Robespierre parce qu'il a donné la main à son émule de patriotisme notre Horatius Coclès—*i.e.* Danton.

³¹ Took the name of Fabricius. Registrar of the Revolutionary Tribunal. Friend of Danton.

³² Danton was accused of malversation during his mission to Belgium.

³³ 'Robespierre tomba malade le 15 février, resta chez lui jusqu'au 13 mars. Tout le temps sa seconde âme Couthon se dit malade aussi, s'absenta ; il disparut le 15, reparut le 13' (Michelet).

³⁴ Served under Dumouriez. Friend of Desmoulins. Billaud was Commissioner from Paris in his army.

³⁵ Minister of War. Suspected of complicity with the Hébertists and threatened with arrest, March 1794.

³⁶ Gabrielle Charpentier, Danton's first wife.

³⁷ The night on which the attack on the Tuileries was organised in 1792.

³⁸ See note 17.

³⁹ The charges brought by the Girondins against Danton, in his absence, of being the organiser of the September massacres are said to have caused her death.

⁴⁰ A police agent in Robespierre's confidence. Arrested on the proposal of the Dantonist, Bourdon of the Oise; and released through Robespierre's intervention.

⁴¹ Hérault de Séchelles. A Dantonist. President of the Convention and Member of the Comité de Salut.

⁴² The news of her death arrived 'à l'heure où l'on délibérait aux Tuileries sur l'arrestation de Camille.' (Claretie.)

⁴³ Robespierre's signature was 'Maximilien-Marie-Isidore Robespierre, député à l'Assemblée nationale, rue Saintonge, paroisse Saint-Louis en l'Île' (*sic*).

⁴⁴ Painter and Terrorist. Member of Convention.

⁴⁵ Candelle of the Opera—'a woman fair to look upon when well rouged' (Carlyle), chosen to impersonate the Goddess of Reason.

⁴⁶ Author of *The Rights of Man*. Took part in the American War of Independence and the French Revolution. Member of Convention. Released after imprisonment and died in New York.

⁴⁷ Actor and Dramatist. Friend and Secretary of Danton. Accused of fraudulently altering a decree.

⁴⁸ The executioner during the Terror.

⁴⁹ A journalist and Girondin leader. When the Girondins were condemned, Desmoulins is said to have rushed out of the court exclaiming, 'It is my "Brissot dévoilé" that has done it.'

⁵⁰ The prison where people were taken immediately before execution.

⁵¹ Founded the Cordelier Club. Danton's supporter, and spared at his fall because, it is said, he was illiterate.

⁵² Member of Convention. Denounced as a Moderatist by Hébert. Accused of malversation.

⁵³ President of Convention. Joint Commissioner with Danton in Belgium. Accused of theft, etc.

⁵⁴ Mayor of Paris, 1791-92. Member and first President of Convention. Sided with the Girondins.

⁵⁵ An ex-priest. Violent Jacobin. Accused of malversation.

⁵⁶ The Duke of Orléans took the name 'Egalité'; and was elected Member of the Convention, September 1792.

⁵⁷ An idle calumny.

⁵⁸ Idle stories to that effect were circulated about Danton.

⁵⁹ General of the Girondin party after their proscription.

⁶⁰ Commanded at the attack on the Tuileries. Served with Dumouriez and in La Vendée.

⁶¹ Commander of the National Guard. Carried out the *coup d'état* of June 2, 1793.

⁶² 'Des lettres de l'ambassadeur d'Espagne disent qu'on te soupçonnait à Paris d'avoir eu des conférences au Temple avec la Reine. L'étranger est toujours très-instruit sur les crimes commis en sa faveur.'—St. Just's Report.

⁶³ Danton read and wrote English, had visited England, and had English friends in Paris.

⁶⁴ She kept a gambling-house. Was not a friend of Danton.

⁶⁵ The Public Accuser.

⁶⁶ President of the Revolutionary Tribunal.

⁶⁷ Fouquier Tinville's deputy. Supporter of Robespierre.

⁶⁸ A Commissioner, and in favour of moderation in La Vendée. Friend of Desmoulins and Danton.

⁶⁹ Members of the Committee of General Security. Vadier reported to Robespierre the supposed plot of the prisons. See Note 71.

⁷⁰ The Duke of Brunswick's proclamation and march on Paris precipitated the September massacres.

⁷¹ Pretended to have been concocted by Lucile Desmoulins and Dillon for the release of the Dantonists.

⁷² The Prince de Lambese commanded the Royal Allemand regiment, and ordered the charge on the people in the Tuileries Gardens, July 13, 1789.

BALLADS AND OTHER VERSE

BY A. H. BEESLY

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